




Speech By  
**Hon. Glenn Butcher**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Record of Proceedings, 9 May 2023

### **PATH TO TREATY BILL**

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (4.25 pm): I rise to support the Path to Treaty Bill 2023. Firstly, I would like to recognise the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathering here today and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge the Indigenous communities and clans in my community—the Gurang, Gooreng Gooreng, Bailai and Taribelang Bunda people.

I would also like to acknowledge the three members in our caucus—Minister Leeanne Enoch, Cynthia Lui and assistant minister Lance McCallum—for the work that they do particularly in supporting and moving forward with treaty here in Queensland. I see the look in their eyes and I hear the tremor in their voices when they speak to us as colleagues in support of treaty and in making sure that we continue to work towards it and ensure that treaty is at the forefront of everyone's mind here in Queensland.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have lived on, as we know, and cared for this country for more than 60,000 years and have never, ever ceded their sovereignty. Voice, treaty and truth—this was the message loud and clear from the historic Uluru Statement from the Heart, a statement that I again commit myself to today.

During this time, First Nations people have cherished Australia's great water channels here in Queensland—the lakes, the rivers, the streams and the gullies. Water holds significant and sacred importance for our First Nations people and is the crux of art, sacred narratives, stories and songs. As Queensland's water minister, this importance is certainly not lost on me. Today we reiterate this importance and our commitment to the respectful and meaningful engagement with First Nations people in Queensland, to protect and promote this sacred relationship that they have with water.

I will never forget the day that we unveiled signage around Kati Thanda—Lake Eyre Basin—last year to recognise the many traditional owner groups and educate the thousands of visitors who go to that area about the rich cultural history of that region. I was joined in Longreach by Uncle George Gorrige, who told me the signs were an important step forward for the education and acceptance of people in their communities.

My department has been on a journey of learning and engaging with our First Nations people and cultures for many years. We are always striving to improve but we are also proud of the work that we have done, especially in our water planning framework where we are committed to updating water plans right across Queensland to include water specifically reserved for First Nations people. This work can be seen right at the tip of Cape York, where almost 500,000 megalitres of water is reserved for First Nation peoples.

This work can be seen in an example I am particularly proud of—the Indigenous land use agreement that I signed with the Darumbal people last year at the Rookwood Weir site. I acknowledge members Barry O'Rourke and Brittany Lauga for their support of those people and for helping to celebrate the signing of that agreement. That agreement guarantees a water allocation from Rookwood Weir for the Darumbal people—a secure water allocation under the control of the Darumbal people.

In North Queensland, we prioritised the values of traditional custodians in the water plan for the Barron catchment. This resulted in the preservation of unallocated water for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support not only economic but social and cultural aspirations. We have learned about community and culture, about traditions and history, and about what real co-design looks like in Queensland.

I use these examples as a demonstration of the work that has been done so far, but with the passage of this bill and the next stages of our path to treaty the real work in Queensland begins. This work is to continue to improve, earn respect and trust, and build on the relationships we have begun with hundreds of traditional owners groups right across Queensland. We are braced for the hard truth-telling that will come as part of Path to Treaty. There is some way to go to atone for the mistakes of the past, but our commitment is to listen, learn and co-design a future that truly partners with our First Nations communities. Our path to treaty marches forward, and I am proud to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders on this journey together. I commend this bill to the House.